

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

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May 8, 2008

The Honorable Michael Chertoff
Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Chertoff:

Organizations and functions under your direction are categorized as high risk programs by the Government Accountability Office (GAO). Although the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has made progress transforming its 22 agencies into a fully functioning department, several key programs within DHS have been designated as being at high risk as early as 1997 and continue to be so today:

- Protecting the Federal Government's Information Systems and the nation's Critical Infrastructure, 1997
- Implementing and Transforming the Department of Homeland Security, 2003
- Establishing Appropriate and Effective Information-sharing Mechanisms to Improve Homeland Security, 2005
- Transforming Federal Oversight of Food Safety, 2007

I am writing to express my concern that these programs continue to be designated as high risk after more than a decade. The fact that our nation's critical infrastructures remain at risk following the creation of DHS is perhaps most alarming. It is well understood that institutional change is often complex and takes both time and resources to transform these often unwieldy programs. However, strategic planning and budgeting can yield staggering results with disciplined management and oversight. As Secretary, you are uniquely positioned to guide this process.

The DHS currently has 97 reports with multiple issues identified by the GAO that remain outstanding. What actions has DHS taken to address these issues and achieve removal from the GAO high risk list in January 2009? Your prompt response is greatly appreciated.

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Please do not hesitate to contact me or Sheldon Shoemaker of my staff at (202) 228-6476 if you would like to discuss these concerns or other matters.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Claire McCaskill". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Claire" and last name "McCaskill" clearly distinguishable.

CLAIRE McCASKILL
United States Senator